

Influence of Research Philosophy on Public Administration Studies

Usman Madugu¹; Moazam Shahwar²

¹Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Science University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria

²Department of Public Administration, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

¹Orcid ID: 0000-0002-1573-6024

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Abstract: Research philosophy shapes the conceptualisation, methodological choices, and outcomes of public administration (PA) studies. This study examines how different research philosophies influence methodological choices, the quality and applicability of research findings, and the relevance of mixed-methods approaches in public administration research. Anchored in pragmatism, the study adopts a qualitative conceptual approach based on secondary data from peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, methodological texts, and policy literature. Thematic content analysis and comparative synthesis were employed to examine the implications of positivism, interpretivism, constructivism, and pragmatism for public administration inquiry. The findings indicate that research philosophy influences researchers' assumptions about social reality, the formulation of research questions, methodological choices, data collection and analysis, and the interpretation and application of findings. Positivism enhances objectivity, measurement, generalisability, and statistical robustness, whereas interpretivism provides deeper contextual understanding of administrative experiences, meanings, and institutional processes. The study further finds that mixed-methods approaches, supported by pragmatism, provide a useful means of integrating quantitative and qualitative perspectives to address the complexity of contemporary public administration issues. The study concludes that philosophical and methodological alignment is essential for enhancing research rigour, credibility, contextual relevance, and policy applicability. Greater philosophical reflexivity and methodological pluralism are therefore recommended to strengthen evidence-based governance and public administration research.

Keywords: Research Philosophy; Positivism; Interpretivism; Pragmatism; Mixed-Methods Research; Methodological Pluralism.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Academic inquiry relies on research philosophy to shape perception, knowledge, and study design. Research philosophy shapes public administration questions, data collection, and conclusions. It establishes assumptions about social reality (ontology), knowledge acquisition (epistemology), and inquiry values (axiology) (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). Understanding these philosophical underpinnings is essential because public administration studies aim to investigate complex phenomena, such as governance structures, policy implement, bureaucratic behavior, and service delivery, which are influenced by human interactions, institutional norms, and socio-political contexts.

Positivist traditions have shaped public administration research by assuming social reality is objective, measurable, and governed by universal laws (Bryman, 2016). Under this philosophy, researchers emphasize quantitative methods,

statistical analysis, and hypothesis testing to generate findings that can be generalized across contexts. This approach has advanced public administration performance measurement frameworks, budget efficiency models, and policy evaluation methods. For example, positivist research has been instrumental in assessing the effectiveness of government programs, identifying determinants of bureaucratic efficiency, and evaluating public service outcomes (Meier & O'Toole, 2019).

Positivism has been limited as public administration problems have become more complex and context-dependent. Numerical measures cannot fully capture organisational culture, leadership dynamics, citizen engagement, and policy interpretation in public administration (Peters, 2018). Consequently, interpretivist and constructivist philosophies have gained prominence, emphasizing that social reality is subjective and constructed through human interactions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These philosophies encourage qualitative research methods,

such as case studies, interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, which allow for a deeper understanding of processes, meanings, and experiences within public institutions (Yin, 2018).

The choice of research philosophy in public administration also shapes methodological rigor and the type of knowledge produced. A positivist orientation prioritizes reliability, internal validity, and generalizability, whereas an interpretivist approach emphasizes credibility, transferability, and contextual understanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Consequently, the philosophical stance of a researcher influences the selection of research design, data collection methods, analytical techniques, and even the interpretation of findings. For instance, a study examining citizen satisfaction with government services may use surveys and statistical models under a positivist framework, whereas the same study could employ interviews and focus groups under an interpretivist framework to explore the nuanced experiences of service users.

Contemporary public administration research increasingly recognizes the value of pragmatism as a guiding philosophy, which bridges the divide between positivism and interpretivism. Pragmatism emphasizes practical problem-solving and the usefulness of knowledge in addressing real-world challenges (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). Researchers adopting a pragmatic stance are open to using both qualitative and quantitative methods, depending on which approach best addresses the research question. This philosophical flexibility is particularly relevant in public administration, where policy implementation, governance reforms, and service delivery are influenced by diverse stakeholders, complex institutional arrangements, and dynamic socio-political environments (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Furthermore, research philosophy influences the ethical considerations, value systems, and accountability of public administration studies. Researchers must decide not only how to collect and analyze data but also how to represent stakeholders, report findings, and inform policy decisions. The philosophical approach adopted affects the credibility and relevance of research outcomes for policymakers, administrators, and the public (Ospina, Esteve, & Lee, 2018).

Despite the recognized importance of research philosophy, many public administration studies inadequately address or explicitly state their philosophical stance. This gap may lead to inconsistencies in methodology, misinterpretation of findings, and limitations in the applicability of research to practical governance challenges. Hence, a systematic examination of how research philosophy shapes public administration studies is crucial. It helps scholars, students, and practitioners align research objectives with appropriate methods, enhance research rigor, and generate knowledge that informs evidence-based governance and effective public policy (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The role of research philosophy in public administration is foundational and multifaceted. It not only guides methodological choices but also shapes the quality, relevance, and impact of research in addressing governance challenges. Understanding the philosophical underpinnings of public administration studies enables researchers to critically evaluate methods, improve the credibility of their findings, and contribute to the development of robust, evidence-based public policies.

➤ *The Objective for the Study is:*

- To examine how different research philosophies influence methodological choices in public administration studies.
- To analyze the impact of research philosophy on the quality, credibility, and applicability of findings in public administration research.
- To assess the relevance of mixed-methods approaches in bridging philosophical divides and enhancing public administration research outcomes.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A continuous, often unspoken, conversation about research philosophy, in other words, the fundamental assumptions about reality (ontology) and how we might learn about it, has formed public administration's intellectual history. This literature review synthesises how competing philosophical paradigms, primarily positivism and interpretivism, have shaped public administration research's methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and identity, arguing that philosophical awareness is essential for methodological rigour and knowledge relevance.

➤ *Positivism and Administration Science*

Modern public management was founded on positivism. The Progressive Era's emphasis on efficiency and early 20th-century logical empiricism inspired foundational scholars like Woodrow Wilson and Frederick Taylor to take a positivist position. This philosophy implies an objective, external administrative world that can be measured and governed by general laws. It regards organisations and policies as concrete entities and uses value-neutral observation and quantitative measurement to develop cumulative, predictive science (Raadschelders, 2011). In the mid-20th century, researchers like Herbert Simon promoted a rigorous "science of administration," which culminated this worldview. Simon (1997) used logical positivism and behavioural techniques to establish public administration on the same epistemological footing as the natural sciences, emphasising testable hypotheses, operational definitions, and a clear fact-value dichotomy. This legacy made quantitative methods (surveys, trials, statistical modelling) the gold standard for "rigorous" research, focused on causation, generality, and control (Meier & Gill, 2000).

➤ *Interpretivism: Reclaiming Meaning and Context*

From the 1970s, interpretivist philosophy offered a forceful counter-narrative. Phenomenologists,

hermeneuticians, and social constructivists attacked positivism. They claimed that language, shared meanings, and cultural practises build the social reality of administration (Yanow, 2014). Interpretivism rejects the detached observer and advocates interaction and interpretation of actors' activities. Robert Denhardt and Dvora Yanow's philosophical shift focused research on bureaucracy's "lived experience". It legitimised qualitative methods—ethnography, discourse analysis, in-depth case studies—for studying how street-level bureaucrats understand policies, administrative cultures, and language-based authority (Wagenaar, 2011). Thus, interpretivism studied the "how" and "why" underlying the "what," emphasising context, process, and subjectivity.

➤ *Paradigm Debates and the Rise of Critical and Pragmatic Turns*

The "paradigm wars," a battle about the discipline's soul, began when positivism and interpretivism clashed. This period saw meta-theoretical discussions regarding incommensurability and knowledge claims' legitimacy. Other philosophical streams sprang from this ferment. Critical theory—based on Habermas and Foucault—emphasized power, ideology, and emancipation. It studies administrative realities as moulded by dominating mechanisms that perpetuate inequality and seeks to critique and change the world (Box, 2015). Pragmatist ideas gained popularity, especially in American public administration. Pragmatism, influenced by Dewey, evaluates ideas and practices based on their ability to solve real issues. This provides philosophical support for methodological pluralism and mixed-methods research, where the research issue guides the approach (Shields & Tajalli, 2006).

➤ *Modern Synthesis and Methodological Implications*

Contemporary literature shifts from conflict to a thoughtful, synthesising view of philosophy. Philosophical reflexivity—the researcher's critical awareness of their assumptions—is increasingly considered a quality trait. Ospina, Esteve, and Lee (2018) believe that actively interacting with ontology and epistemology helps research design by guaranteeing internal consistency between the study question, methodology, and evaluation criteria. For instance, a positivist study on citizen satisfaction would stress standardised survey tools and statistical validity, while an interpretivist study would use narrative interviews and prioritise authenticity and resonance with participants' experiences. Mixed-methods research is now supported by philosophical pluralism. Pragmatism allows scholars like Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) to strategically integrate positivist-leaning quantitative methods (e.g., a large-N survey) with interpretivist-leaning qualitative methods (e.g., follow-up focus groups) to better understand complex administrative phenomena. The philosophy shapes pure designs and mixed-methods integration logic.

III. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The editorial introduction to the special issue 'Eastern and Western Philosophies: Rethinking the Foundations of Public Administration' is by Ongaro et al. (2025). This

special issue explores the relationship between philosophy and public administration by combining eastern and western philosophies to examine public administration core themes. In this special issue, papers from eastern and western philosophical perspectives address key public Administration (PA) issues and can be critically revisited in their ontological or epistemological foundations, illuminated from novel angles, and even advanced by having philosophical thinking complementing social scientific thinking.

According to Ongaro (2020), public administration is an interdisciplinary field that shares social science challenges and dilemmas. Importantly, in the social sciences, "explanation" always refers to both knowing the reasons of a group of events (causation) and assigning meaning to a social phenomenon. This article treats epistemological issues exclusively from the philosophical foundations, referring the reader to general PA works on the topic (Riccucci, 2010; Van Thiel, 2013). Using broad philosophical ideas, this review revisits public administration logics of inquiry. We have indirectly addressed epistemology in PA throughout the review by discussing key philosophical traditions with important implications for the philosophy of knowledge: neo-positivism to post-modernism, critical realism to phenomenology, historicism to pragmatism, etc. Popper's social science philosophy and Kuhn's scientific paradigm competition and distinction between "normal science," cumulative within a dominant paradigm, and paradigmatic revolutions, have also been discussed. Competing paradigms are likely how social scientists define epistemological disagreements. PA has been claimed to be typified by a list of paradigms rather than one paradigm and knowledge accumulation (Bauer, 2018; Raadschelders, 2005). It is also believed that neo-positivism, social constructivism, and critical realism dominate the discipline. Sun et al. (2024) describe the importance of research philosophy in management studies. It critically reviews research philosophy, including ontological, epistemological, and axiological features, and their implications for management research. Traditional ontological perspectives (realism, idealism, and pragmatism) and their field impacts are examined. Additionally, current ontological debates are examined and their significance to management study. The study also examines positivism, interpretivism, and critical realism as epistemological frameworks for research approaches. The impact of epistemological changes on management research is examined. Novel ideas are offered throughout the review, laying the groundwork for theoretical and empirical progress. Researchers should embrace ethical pragmatism, dynamic reflexivity, and epistemic pluralism to develop more comprehensive and flexible theories. The paper concludes that research philosophy should be explored and innovated to shape management research. It stresses the dynamic character of research philosophy and its ability to improve management.

Ongaro et al. (2024) assert that philosophical inquiry could significantly enhance the evolution of PA theory and practice. Despite this promise, philosophical inquiry has

thus far been utilised very marginally in public administration research. Philosophy's integration with PA has predominantly involved three schools of thought: Pragmatism, various forms of Relativism-Constructivism, and Positivism. This article contends that an alternative philosophical framework, specifically Critical Realism, should be examined more rigorously for its relevance to fundamental concerns in PA studies. This philosophical viewpoint is utilised to illuminate significant concerns in the theory and execution of public value, good governance and management, a prominent domain of scientific research and practical implementation in PA and management. Wessels (2023) sought to appreciate the epistemological and methodological foundations for significant insights into public management. It was based on two premises: the social ontology of a multifaceted, evolving, and socially constructed public administration reality, and the simultaneous presence of scholars, administrators, politicians, and people inside this PA context. The present research indicates that a contextual inquiry into this reality necessitates, first and foremost, an expansive epistemology to acknowledge and evaluate all types of both physical and intangible knowledge on PA in pertinent contexts. Secondly, it suggests an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates multi- and trans-disciplinary traditions to achieve a thorough understanding of PA in pertinent circumstances. Significant understanding of PA can affect public policy solely, if (a) it aligns with the social ontology of this reality, (b) it holds value for the contextually situated and interconnected knowledge stakeholders, (c) this evolving, irreducible, and intricate reality is examined through an expansive epistemology, and (d) it arises from a methodology of inter-science and complex reasoning.

➤ *Theoretical Framework*

This research is grounded in Pragmatism Theory, offering a versatile and pragmatic perspective on the influence of research philosophy in the field of PA studies. Pragmatism, articulated by thinkers like John Dewey, William James, and Charles Sanders Peirce, prioritises practical outcomes, effective problem-solving, and the applicability of knowledge in tangible situations, rather than strict loyalty to one philosophical doctrine. In the realm of PA, pragmatism holds significant importance as administrative research frequently addresses intricate, multifarious, and contextually reliant issues like policy execution, governance, transformations, reforms and public service delivery.

In this context, the selection of research philosophy, whether positivism or interpretivism, is assessed according to its ability to produce practical insights and facilitate evidence-driven decision-making. Positivism posits that social reality is objective, quantifiable, and regulated by universal principles, making it amenable to quantitative techniques like surveys, statistical analysis, and performance indicators (Bryman, 2016). In the realm of public administration research, positivist methodologies are essential in analysing efficiency, appraising policy results, and quantifying administrative efficacy across various organisations or regions. Positivism underscores

dependability, reproducibility, and applicability, furnishing policymakers with empirical evidence for extensive decision-making.

In contrast, interpretivism asserts that social reality is subjective and formed through social interactions, necessitating that researchers appreciate the meanings, experiences, and viewpoints of persons inside their institutional and societal frameworks (Yanow, 2014). Interpretivist methodologies generally utilise qualitative techniques like interviews, case studies, and participant observation, which are crucial for examining organisational culture, leadership conduct, policy execution procedures, and citizen experiences. Interpretivism aids in the development of theories, contextually relevant policy formulation, and enhanced public service provision by capturing subtle insights.

Pragmatism connects these two frameworks by promoting methodological pluralism, allowing researchers to choose qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods according to their practical effectiveness in resolving particular administrative issues (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Pragmatism, in this context, dismisses the strict division between positivist and interpretivist methodologies, focusing instead on the congruence of research philosophy with the research issue, data necessities, and desired policy results. Utilising pragmatism as the theoretical foundation, this research emphasises that research philosophy transcends mere academic abstraction, serving as a crucial factor in the quality, relevance, and influence of public administration studies. It assists researchers in choosing approaches that yield strong, contextually relevant, and practical findings for enhancing governance and administrative efficacy.

IV. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative, conceptual framework to investigate the influence of research philosophy on public administration studies. The study is based on secondary data sourced from peer-reviewed journals, scholarly books, methodological manuals, and published policy papers. The material was meticulously gathered from scholarly databases like Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science, employing keywords such as “research philosophy,” “public administration,” “positivism,” “interpretivism,” and “methodological approaches.” This research utilises thematic content analysis to rigorously investigate the impact of research philosophies on the selection of methodologies, the development of research enquiries, data gathering techniques, and the interpretation of results in PA research. Comparative synthesis is utilised to discern patterns, resemblances, and differences in the deployment of positivist and interpretivist philosophies, along with their influence on research quality, validity, and policy significance.

V. RESULTS/ FINDINGS

Research philosophy shapes the conception, investigation, interpretation, and application of knowledge

in PA. It incorporates assumptions about reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), values in research (axiology), and knowledge-generation processes (methodology). These philosophical assumptions are crucial in PA because it studies complex social, political, institutional, and administrative events that cannot be grasped through a single methodological lens. According to Van Thiel (2022), PA research has special methodological characteristics because academics investigate complex public-sector ecologies that incorporate political, social, and administrative factors. Recent literature demonstrates that philosophy has shaped PA research. Accordingly, Tang et al. (2025) examined 58,333 public administration journal articles and discovered that research philosophical knowledge shapes PA's intellectual development.

➤ *Influence on Conception of Reality*

PA researchers define "real." by their research philosophy disposition. Positivists believe social reality is objective and can be observed, measured, and evaluated. Thus, a positivist PA researcher may study organisational performance, employee productivity, policy implementation, corruption, citizen satisfaction, and service delivery using quantifiable variables and statistical correlations.

Interpretivism/constructivism holds that human meanings, experiences, interactions, relationships, and interpretations construct and shape social reality. This perspective is important for PA because actors may interpret trust in government, administrative legitimacy, bureaucratic culture, citizen participation, and public-sector accountability differently. Accordingly, Bae (2016) contend that interpretivist PA prioritises meaning-making, contextuality, and subjectivity in administrative phenomena. Philosophy affects whether a researcher views an administrative issue as an objective fact to be measured or a social reality to be understood and interpreted.

➤ *Influence on Methodological Choices in PA Studies*

The philosophy of research is crucial in influencing methodological decisions in PA research, as it forms the basis of the researcher's beliefs regarding reality, knowledge, and the interaction between the researcher and the interest of study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). Philosophical frameworks establish criteria for identifying appropriate research methodologies, guiding data collection and analysis, as well as influencing the interpretation and use of results in policy and administrative settings. Positivism represents a prevailing philosophical approach in PA studies, positing that an objective, quantifiable reality exists apart from human perspective (Bryman, 2016). Investigators employing a positivist paradigm typically choose quantitative techniques, including surveys, experiments, and statistical analysis, to provide broadly applicable results. These techniques are meticulously organised and prioritise reproducibility, dependability, and the testing of hypotheses. For instance, A research investigating the influence of budget allocation on the performance of local government would often utilise extensive quantitative data and regression analysis to determine causal links (Meier & O'Toole, 2019). Positivist

philosophy is usually deployed in assessing performance, policies, and accountability, where quantitative metrics are essential for making decisions (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, & Halligan, 2015).

Conversely, interpretivism perceives social reality as subjective and shaped by human interactions, highlighting the significance of context, meaning, and perception (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Investigators adhering to interpretivist principles frequently utilise qualitative techniques such as case studies, interviews, focus groups, and document analysis to examine administrative procedures, leadership conduct, and citizen experiences. For example, appreciating the manner in which public officials execute policy directives in culturally varied areas necessitates in-depth interviews and observations to grasp intricate human behaviours and institutional interactions (Ospina, Esteve, & Lee, 2018). Interpretivist philosophy yields profound understanding of policy execution, bureaucratic latitude, and stakeholder engagement, which cannot be adequately encompassed by quantitative measures.

Alternative philosophies, like pragmatism, promote methodological pluralism, enabling researchers to integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches according to the research issue and practical factors (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). Pragmatism allows researchers to combine quantitative analysis with contextual insight, hence improving the validity and significance of results. A mixed-methods investigation might initially measure citizen contentment with public services and subsequently employ interviews to delve into the root causes of discontent, yielding practical recommendations for policymakers. Research philosophy substantially influences methodological choices in PA research.

Positivism prioritises quantitative precision and broad applicability, interpretivism highlights profound insight and contextual comprehension, while pragmatism advocates for methodical synthesis to tackle intricate administrative challenges efficiently. Appreciating these philosophical foundations guarantees that research design corresponds with study aims, hence improving the quality, credibility, and policy significance of PA research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yanow, 2014).

➤ *Influence on Quality, Credibility and Applicability of Findings in PA Studies*

By guiding studies' assumptions, design, and interpretation, research philosophy affects the quality, credibility, and applicability of findings in PA. Philosophical views influence how researchers define social reality, choose techniques, and evaluate data, hence affecting policymakers' and practitioners' reliability and actionability respectively (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). Positivist disposition, which presupposes an objective and quantifiable reality, prioritises precision, dependability, and applicability. Quantitative techniques consistent with this ideology, including surveys, experiments, and statistical modelling, enable researchers to generate replicable

outcomes with robust internal and external validity (Bryman, 2016). Using national-level survey data to assess public service delivery helps policymakers find patterns, correlations, and causal links that can drive administrative decisions (Meier & O'Toole, 2019). Positivist research is influential in evidence-based policy because it is structured and systematic, improving measurement accuracy and statistical significance. However, its focus on numerical data may limit contextual understanding, reducing application in complex, socio-politically driven contexts (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

Conversely, interpretivist research focuses on understanding the subjective experiences and meanings of individuals within public institutions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative methods like case studies, interviews, and ethnography provide rich, context-sensitive data that represent real-world administrative procedures, stakeholder perspectives, and organisational culture, hence boosting credibility (Ospina, Esteve, & Lee, 2018). These insights enhance policy execution, leadership, and citizen participation. Interpretivist research may have difficulty generalising because findings are generally context-specific and replication is challenging. Pragmatism balances research philosophies' rigidity and promotes methodological flexibility with mixed techniques (mixed-methods) to improve research quality, credibility, and applicability (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). Pragmatic studies combine quantitative and qualitative methods to capture contextual factors and human dynamics that affect PA outcomes and give statistically solid evidence. For instance, a mixed-methods study on a government digital service initiative could quantify adoption rates (quantitative) and analyse user experiences and barriers (qualitative), hence yielding credible and practical conclusions.

➤ *Influence on the Relationship between Theory and Practice*

The philosophical stance of a researcher influences the primary aim of their research, whether it is to elucidate, comprehend, critique, or address administrative issues. This matter holds particular significance in PA, as the field has historically focused on pragmatic governance challenges. Pragmatism has consequently garnered significant interest in the discipline. Shields (2008) delineates significant links between classical pragmatism and American public administration, defining pragmatism as practical, pluralistic, participative, and provisional inquiry. In a similar vein, Shields (1996) contends that pragmatism elucidates the policy impact of professional organisations and offers insight into the connection between administrative theory and its application. This implies that a practical evaluation of PA might not solely enquire, "What is occurring?" but also, "What actions can be taken, and what data would assist practitioners in making more informed choices?"

➤ *Influence on the Development of PA as a discipline*

The philosophy of research has played a significant role in establishing PA as a methodologically diverse and interdisciplinary domain. Contemporary PA embraces a variety of scientific inquiry paradigms, including positivist,

interpretative, pragmatic, constructivist, and a growing emphasis on critical-realist viewpoints. Tang et al. (2025) illustrate the significant and progressive impact of philosophical insights on PA through review of numerous PA articles. Furthermore, Ongaro and Yang (2025) contend that philosophical viewpoints can significantly enhance the theoretical advancement of PA, while promoting increased focus on critical realism. Thus, philosophical plurality enables scholars in PA to examine administrative occurrences from various yet harmonious viewpoints.

VI. DISCUSSION

The results of this investigation highlight the pivotal influence of research philosophy on methodological decisions, research integrity, and the overall results of PA research. A key observation is that philosophical alignment significantly affects researchers' problem conceptualisation, selection of data collection technique, and findings' interpretation. Researchers that subscribe to a positivist ideology typically prefer quantitative approaches, prioritising objectivity, measurement, and generalisability. This corresponds with the necessity for evidence-driven policymaking, wherein quantitative indicators like service delivery metrics, budgetary efficiency, or citizen satisfaction surveys furnish concrete criteria for assessment (Bryman, 2016). The research validates that these methodologies are especially potent for extensive performance evaluations, gauging administrative efficacy, and determining relationships between administrative actions and results.

On the other hand, the findings reveal that interpretivist disposition is essential for appreciating the intricate and context-specific realities of PA. Utilising qualitative methodologies like interviews, focus groups, and case studies, researchers can obtain insights, experiences, and organisational interactions that quantitative approaches frequently miss (Ospina, Esteve, & Lee, 2018). For example, appreciating the reasons behind the varying implementation of policies by public officials in different regions or the impact of bureaucratic culture on decision-making necessitates the profound contextual insights offered by interpretivist methodologies. This underscores that certain administrative occurrences like leadership conduct, policy analysis, and public involvement cannot be entirely elucidated by quantitative data alone. A significant discovery is the pertinence and efficacy of mixed-methods strategies in reconciling these philosophical disparities. By integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches, researchers can harness the advantages of both frameworks while alleviating their drawbacks (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative data can reveal overarching patterns and trends, whereas qualitative insights elucidate the underlying mechanics of these patterns. This comprehensive methodology bolsters the reliability and practical relevance of results, providing policymakers with data that is statistically sound and contextually informed.

Moreover, this research underscores that the selection of methodology profoundly influences the validity, trustworthiness, and applicability of research findings.

Discrepancies between research philosophy and methods might compromise findings, diminish confidence in outcomes, and restrict their relevance for policy development. Pragmatism, as exemplified by mixed-methods strategies, provides a versatile framework that emphasises practical solutions and the generation of applicable knowledge (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

VII. CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that research philosophy serves as a fundamental aspect in the development of PA research, shaping methodological choices, the quality of outcomes, and their applicability to policy and practice. The philosophical framework shapes researchers' understanding of social reality, the formulation of research questions, and the selection of investigative methods for administrative phenomena. Positivist philosophies endorse quantitative methods, ensuring objectivity, generalisability, and statistical robustness, thereby making them particularly suitable for analysing large-scale policy impacts, service performance, and administrative effectiveness. Alternatively, interpretivist and constructivist frameworks focus on qualitative strategies, facilitating the examination of the subtle, context-sensitive aspects of governance, including bureaucratic ethos, leadership conduct, and stakeholder insights. An important finding from this research is that neither quantitative nor qualitative strategies alone can adequately elucidate the complexities inherent in PA. The utilisation of mixed-methods frameworks has surfaced as a practical solution, uniting as well as synergising philosophical differences and harnessing the benefits of both paradigms. Quantitative methods yield data on trends and associations, while qualitative methods elucidate the intrinsic mechanisms, contextual variables, and experiential narratives that inform administrative outcomes. This comprehensive strategy amplifies the reliability, validity, and practical applicability of research findings, hence underpinning evidence-based policy development and effective administration. Additionally, this study emphasises that methodological choices rooted in suitable philosophical rationale improve the integrity, reliability, and policy influence of PA research. A lack of harmony between philosophical principles and methods may jeopardise the trustworthiness and usefulness of outcomes, whereas purposeful philosophical analysis fosters methodological integrity and significant insights.

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